

Alston-with-Garrigill  
Rural District Council

ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
Medical Officer of Health  
for 1937.



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**OF THE**  
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TO THE ALSTON-WITH-GARRIGILL RURAL DISTRICT  
COUNCIL.

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present the Annual Report  
of the Medical Officer of Health for your area during the year  
1937.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

WM. S. DALGETTY,

Medical Officer of Health.

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER FOR THE ALSTON-WITH-GARRIGILL AREA FOR THE YEAR 1937.

## SECTION A.

### STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area ... ..	36,971 Acres.
Population : Registrar General's Estimate of Resident	
Population, 1937 ... ..	2,390
Number of Inhabited Houses (end of 1937) according to Rate Book :—	
Alston Ward (Country) ... ..	176
Alston Ward (Lighting Area) ... ..	274
Nenthead Ward ... ..	200
Garrigill Ward ... ..	135
Total ... ..	785
Rateable Value ... ..	£8,119
Sum represented by Penny Rate	
(less Exchequer Grants) ... ..	£30 0 0

### SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

The improvement in industry noticed in 1936 slowly continued during 1937. Increased activity in the lead mines, together with renewed burning of lime and the reopening of two small anthracite mines, contributed to better conditions. There is evidence of a greater demand for working class houses, and quite an appreciable immigration from other distressed areas down the Tyne Valley.

### VITAL STATISTICS.

		Males.		Females.		Total.
LIVE BIRTHS.						
Legitimate	...	16	...	25	...	41
Illegitimate	...	4	...	—	...	4
Total	...	20	...	25	...	45
STILL BIRTHS.						
Legitimate	...	2	...	2	...	4
Illegitimate	...	—	...	—	...	—
Total	...	2	...	2	...	4

The birth-rate for the area for the year, therefore, was 18.8, as compared with the rate for the administrative county 16.0, and for rural districts 15.3. The birth-rate for England and Wales was 14.9.

The still birth-rate for the area was 81.6 per 1000 births.

			Males.		Females.		Total.
DEATHS	...	...	13	...	16	...	29

These figures are equivalent to a death-rate of 12.1 per 1000 estimated population. This compares with 14.4 for the administrative county and 14.6 for the rural areas of the county. These rates when corrected for age bias become: Alston Rural District 10.9, County 13.8, Rural Districts 13.3. The death-rate for the whole of England and Wales was 12.4.

There was no death from Puerperal Causes.

Deaths of infants under one year of age :—One, due to prematurity.

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	...	...	...	2
Measles (all ages)	...	...	...	nil.
Whooping Cough (all ages)	...	...	...	nil.
Diarrhoea (under two years)	...	...	...	nil.

There has been no outstanding class of invalidity, or new cause of such in the district.

The outstanding feature of the health review of the year is the high birth-rate. This was to be expected following a very low one in 1936, i.e., total 27 in 1936; total 49 in 1937.

Speaking generally, the health of the area was good. Twelve cases of Scarlet Fever marked the end of the 1936 epidemic. Influenza of a mild type was widespread and reached its peak in the Alston district in March. The great snowstorm of March checked its spread to the outlying districts, where one usually finds the severest effects of the malady. The epidemic was felt in Nenthead during June. During January and February Mumps was widespread in Nenthead, having been brought there from Co. Durham. Chicken Pox was considerably in evidence during the last quarter, and the exceptionally stormy weather of the close of the year accounted for much illness, chiefly of a bronchial character and amongst the elderly.

## SECTION B.

### (1) **Public Health Officers of the Authority.**

Medical Officer of Health. (Part-time). Wm. S. Dalgetty,  
M.B., Ch.B., Carson Holm, Alston.

At home daily, 9-10 a.m. 6-7 p.m.

Sanitary Inspector. M. Hetherington,  
Sharon Cottage, Garrigill.

The remarks made last year regarding accommodation and allowances for the above in the interests of efficiency are still valid.

### (ii) (a) **Laboratory Facilities :—**

Are adequately met by the Cumberland Infirmary Staff as the need arises.

### (b) **Ambulance Facilities :—**

Consequent upon the operation of the Road Traffic Act, and from lack of public support, the voluntarily maintained Ambulance Van is not now available. This is a serious state of affairs in a district so remote from medical and surgical facilities, and more so since industrial activities are becoming more numerous, for it is obligatory upon the management of coal mines to have the right of call upon an ambulance. Generous grants are available from the County Council towards maintenance of existing Ambulances, but no voluntary body exists in Alston to carry the responsibility.

### (c) **Nursing in the Home :—**

The arrangements are unchanged and continue to fall short of the desirable minimum in all but maternity cases, due chiefly to lack of public support of the excellent voluntary Nursing Association.

### (d) **Clinics and Treatment Centres :—**

These are maintained as before and continue to be used to advantage.

### (e) **Hospitals :—**

No alteration has occurred in the facilities and accommodation and the question of a mortuary remains unsolved. Tentative steps were taken to unite forces with the Cottage Hospital to provide such a building, properly fitted, to serve both the district and the institution. This admirable scheme was not carried to completion, but may yet be adopted.

## SECTION C.

### 1. (i) Water.

**Alston.** The main defects of this supply remain as fully detailed in my last report. A distinct improvement has been achieved by the right of control over the Spring Field, which has been obtained by the Council taking a lease of the field: farm animals and poultry can now be excluded.

Bacteriological samples taken during the year indicate that all three spring sources are contaminated. After chlorination is carried out an excellent state is found as regards bacterial purity.

The main problems remaining to be solved are:—

- (a) Excessive waste of the water by users.
- (b) Corrosion of the main pipes.
- (c) Smallness of the reservoir in relation to the consumption.
- (d) Supplying of unchlorinated water when the single Chlorometer suffers mechanical faults.
- (e) Complaints as to Chlorous and Phenolic tastes consequent on (a) and (c).

The recurrent complaint of lack of water at Fairhill Cottages, Alston, has been properly solved by the laying to the cottages of a new 1 in. galvanised pipe. The distance covered by this is 300 yards. Together with fittings the cost was £40.

**Garrigill** water supply remains unaltered and highly satisfactory.

**Nenthead.** The quality and quantity here are satisfactory. One small additional facility was afforded by the erection of a stand pipe at Whitehall to serve a group of houses.

**Water Rate.** Revenue for the maintenance of supply systems has up till now been levied as part of the General Purposes Rate. For the first time a rate will be levied on consumers in 1938. This will in future largely control the question of improvements and additions. There are frequent requests from the more outlying and scattered groups of dwellings for a water service, and the hope of meeting these is materially increased with the advent of a Water Rate.

### (ii) Drainage and Sewerage.

The sewerage systems and disposal works proposed for the three villages in 1935 with the aid of Special Areas grants, were well advanced as regards preliminaries and all was ready for a start at the end of 1937. No actual works were carried out.



## (2) Rivers and Streams.

Improvement is to be anticipated in the state of pollution when the above sewerage works are completed, but many small effluents of doubtful quality will not be remedied.

## (3) (i) Closet Accommodation.

No. of earth closets in December, 1937	...	163
No. of pail closets in December 1937	...	242
No. of water closets in December, 1937	...	389

It is to be hoped that a big improvement in the position will rapidly follow the sewerage systems projected.

## (ii) Scavenging.

Contracts are let annually in Alston, Garrigill and Nenthead areas respectively for the collection of household refuse by private carters in these areas. The more populous areas are served twice weekly while certain outlying places are included in the scheme at less frequent intervals. The system is found to work fairly satisfactorily. A disadvantage arises from the unsuitability of the carts sometimes employed. Improvement is called for in Alston as to the hour of collection. It is no unusual thing for refuse to be lying about the pavements and lanes till the afternoon and some definite policy is called for to ensure more seemly containers for household ashes, etc. Public opinion appears to accept the most unsuitable and variously assorted uncovered articles for the purpose of ash buckets. Disposal of collected refuse is by dumping by courtesy of the owner on waste ground. A central incinerator with a suitable mechanical vehicle for collection has been proposed and would appear to be the satisfactory solution for this service.

## (iii) Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The Sanitary Inspector's Report is as follows :—

Number of Inspections	...	...	...	540
Nuisances reported	...	...	...	69
Nuisances abated without Notice	...	...	...	14
Informal Notices	...	...	...	49
Statutory Notices	...	...	...	6
Number of Houses Inspected	...	...	...	84
Houses Disinfected	...	...	...	4
Houses Demolished	...	...	...	2
New Houses Erected	...	...	...	nil.
Houses re-conditioned	...	...	...	3
Plans submitted	...	...	...	2
Plans passed	...	...	...	1
Estimates prepared	...	...	...	2

Slaughter House Inspections	...	...	14
New Water Closets	...	...	1
New Baths	...	...	2
Number of New Water Supplies	...		nil.
Number of New Hot Water Circulations			3
Number of New Wash Basins and Sanitary Alterations	...	...	3
Number of New Sewer Connections	...		1
Number of New Water Connections	...		3

- (iv) **Shops.** A general survey of these shows that they are good, with minor exceptions and no action was taken under the Shops Act, 1934.
- (v) **Smoke Abatement.** Regulations relative to this are inapplicable to the area.
- (vi) **Swimming Baths and Pools.** None exist in the area.
- (vii) **Bed Bugs.** No evidence of the existence of these in any house was found.

4. **Schools.** The suggestions contained in the memorandum on Closure and Exclusion from School are closely applied on occasion.

**Garrigill.** The closet accommodation still remains both inadequate and unsatisfactory. It is hoped that new sewerage provisions will permit of an early improvement.

**Nenthall.** The chief defect of lack of water supply awaits a solution. The number on the roll is increasing and the accommodation and fittings are dilapidated. In particulars a fire grate is urgently required in the smaller room.

**Nenthead.** Some improvement has been attempted as regards the wash basins mentioned last year, but the position is still unsatisfactory. There is room also for improvement in the lavatory accommodation.

## SECTION D.

### HOUSING.

The Council's activities in the direction of new house building have been strenuous but entirely unproductive. Great diffidence prevails on account of the uncertain employment conditions and the fluctuation of the resident population. There seems little doubt that at the present time an additional 36 houses would be amply tenanted, but the doubt as to future requirements has led the Council to refrain from undertaking what appears to be a great liability. The hope of aid from the North-Eastern Housing Association had not materialised at the close of the year, and the Council did not see fit to proceed on its own responsibility as long as that possibility remained. The lack of alternative accommodation has thus temporarily suspended the Clearance Area and Demolition schemes. Good progress, under pressure, was made by owners whose property came under Sections 9 and 11 of the 1936 Act.

#### 1. Inspection of Dwelling-houses during the year :—

(1) (a) Total number of dwelling-houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) ... ..	59
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose ...	76
(2) (a) Number of dwelling-houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925	17
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose ...	17
(3) Number of dwelling-houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ... ..	None
(4) Number of dwelling-houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ...	3

#### 2. Remedy of Defects during the year without Service of Formal Notices :—

Number of defective dwelling-houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers ... ..	42
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#### 3. Action under Statutory Powers during the Year :—

- (a) Proceedings under Sections 9, 10 and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :

(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	...	...	36
(2)	Number of dwelling-houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :			
(a)	By owners	...	...	15
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners	...	...	None
(b)	Proceedings under Public Health Acts :			
(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied			3
(2)	Number of dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :			
(a)	By owners	...	...	3
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners	...	...	None
(c)	Proceedings under Sections 11 and 13 of the Housing Act, 1936 :			
(1)	Number of dwelling-houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made	...	...	2
(2)	Number of dwelling-houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders	...	...	2
(d)	Proceedings under Section 12 of the Housing Act, 1936 :			
(1)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were made	...	...	None
(2)	Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the tenement or room having been rendered fit	...	...	None
4.	<b>Housing Act, 1936, Part IV., Overcrowding :—</b>			
(a)	(i) Number of dwelling-houses overcrowded at the end of the year	...	...	6
	(ii) Number of families dwelling therein	...	...	6
	(iii) Number of persons dwelling therein	...	...	29
(b)	Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year	...	...	None
(c)	(i) Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year	...	...	10
	(i) Number of persons concerned in such cases	...	...	57
(d)	Particulars of any cases in which dwelling-houses have again become overcrowded after the Local Authority have taken steps for the abatement of overcrowding.			None
(e)	Any other particulars with respect to overcrowding conditions upon which the Medical Officer of Health may consider it desirable to report	...	...	None

## SECTION E.

## INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

## (a) Milk Supply.

There remained last year three premises used for milk production which were unsatisfactory for that purpose. Improvement sufficient to warrant registration has been achieved in none of these. Improvements are being pressed for in these three cases, only one of which calls for much structural alteration.

The Sanitary Inspector joins with the County Veterinary Officer in his routine inspection. He also makes periodical inspection as his time permits and as necessity indicates. He reports continued improvement in the knowledge of clean milk production and attributes failure in certain cases to carelessness.

All cases of unsatisfactory results of sampling are notified of their failure to meet requirements, and are followed up.

**Sampling.** Once again no Tubercular specimen of milk was found in the area. The following table shows the position as regards other contamination. Arrangements have been made for a greater number of samples to be taken, and all to be taken strictly in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health Memorandum on Bacteriological Tests for Graded Milk.

Total Samples taken : 20.

	Number satisfactory.	Number unsatisfactory.
Test for presence of Coliform Bacilli in 1/100 m.l. ...	10	3
Methylene Blue Test ...	7	13

A great seasonal variation exists in the percentage of satisfactory samples. This is not brought out by the table, but it is found that during warm and dry conditions that the percentage of satisfactory samples is small. The above figures are obtained from samples taken as follows :—

May 6.

August 1.

June 4.

October 1.

July 6.

December 2.

Thus it would appear that, in a normal year, when samples are more evenly spread, the results would show more favourably.

(b) **Meat.**

No alteration of the structural defects of the premises used for slaughtering has been achieved. Warnings as regards cleanliness continue to be required. The provision of a communal place of slaughter is desirable, but apparently unattainable. The lack of this makes supervision difficult, and during the year no information was received concerning diseased carcasses, though it is hardly to be supposed that such do not from time to time pass out of the slaughter houses.

(c) **Ice Cream.**

Periodical supervision is maintained of the various premises where ice cream is made and offered for sale.

Two samples were taken and treated for test purposes in the same way as retail milk. Both were highly unsatisfactory on the milk standard. They fell far short in purity of the standard found when sampling milk from the farm which supplies the ice cream makers. There does not seem to be any satisfactory procedure for dealing with this aspect of milk supply to children.



## SECTION F.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS  
AND OTHER DISEASES.

2. An adequate note of these is made at the beginning of this report.

**Diphtheria Immunisation.** Only four children were availed of the free dose of Precipitated Anti-toxin offered by the Council. Towards the close of the year the age limit of the offer was extended to include children under twelve years of age.

**Measles.** No action has been taken towards the provision of Measles serum, and no case of the disease was noticed during the year. It is, however, now six years since the last epidemic of Measles, and another epidemic may arise at any time amongst the children under five. While cases occurred in neighbouring districts, Alston fortunately escaped.

**Notifiable Diseases (other than Tuberculosis)  
during the year 1937.**

Disease.	Total Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Smallpox ... ..	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever ... ..	12	11	nil.
Diphtheria ... ..	—	—	—
Enteric Fever (including Paratyphoid) ... ..	—	—	—
Puerperal Fever ... ..	—	—	—
Puerperal Pyrexia ... ..	3	nil.	nil.
Pneumonia ... ..	3	2	1
Other diseases generally notifiable ... ..	—	—	—
Erysipelas ... ..	5	nil.	nil.

## Tuberculosis.

## New Cases and Mortality during 1937.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.		Pulmonary.		Non-Pulmonary.	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1 .....	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
5 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
10 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
20 .....	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	1
25 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
35 .....	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
45 .....	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
55 .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
65 and upwards	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	1	...	...	2	1	...	...	1



CAUSES OF DEATH IN ALSTON-WITH-GARRIGILL  
RURAL DISTRICT IN 1937.

Causes of death.							M.	F.
All Causes ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	13	16
1. Typhoid Fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
2. Measles	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
3. Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
4. Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
5. Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
6. Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
7. Encephalitis lethargica	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
8. Cerebro-spinal Fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
9. Respiratory tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
10. Other tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
11. Syphilis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
12. Gen. paralysis of insane, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
13. Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
14. Diabetes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15. Cerebral hæmorrhage	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
16. Heart disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	6
17. Aneurysm	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
18. Other circulatory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	3
19. Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
20. Pneumonia (all forms)	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
21. Other respiratory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
22. Peptic Ulcer	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
24. Appendicitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
23. Diarrhœa, etc. (under two years)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
25. Cirrhosis of liver	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
26. Other liver diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
27. Other digestive diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
28. Nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
29. Puerperal sepsis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
30. Other puerperal diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
31. Congenital causes, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
32. Senility	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
33. Suicide	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
34. Other violence	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
35. Other defined causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...
36. Ill-defined causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1

Causes of death.							M.	F.
Special Causes (included in No. 35) :								
Smallpox	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Poliomelitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Polioencephalitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Deaths of Infants under 1 year. Total							1	...
Legitimate							1	...
Illegitimate							...	...
Live Births. Total							20	25
Legitimate							16	25
Illegitimate							4	...
Still Births. Total							2	2
Legitimate							2	2
Illegitimate							...	...
Resident Population							2,390	



